

# God's Tenth

BY

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IN touching the question of giving, we touch the most vital point pertaining to the consecration and spiritual power of the Church. In saying this we speak from experience, as we certainly speak according to Scripture. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, \* \* \* and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Here plainly the giving of tithes is made the condition of an abundant outpouring of the Spirit. The spiritualizing method of interpreting Scripture, which robs us of so much vital truth by frittering away its meaning in metaphor and simile, has often robbed us of the real significance of this text. Prayer, testimony, effort, self-denial—how often do we hear these duties mentioned as summing up and fulfilling the requirements of tithes!

But "tithes" means money or other property of equivalent value; and the effusion of God's Spirit is here made contingent upon bringing in these tithes and paying up these dues to God. A tenth of his income was required of the Jew

to be set apart and sacredly devoted to God's treasury. And this was the first tenth, and not the last tenth; the first fruits and not dregs and leavings. And while the amount is not specified in the New Testament, the same principle is carried over: "Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him" (I Cor. xvi. 2). Here is consecrated giving—laying by in store—a certain sum set apart and made sacred to God's use, and which thereafter one should no more think of using for himself than he would think of taking the same sum from his neighbor's pocket. And here is proportionate giving—"as God hath prospered him."

Ought the proportion to be any less under the gospel than under the law? Surely not, when we remember that we have as our exemplar One who, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich;" and that we have the precept of this exemplar, which no ingenuity can explain away: "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath cannot be my disciple." In the light of such high standards, who can say that at least we ought not to give one-tenth of our income to the Lord? If any Christian who has never tried it will make the experiment, conscientiously following it through to the end, in prosperity and adversity, we predict for him two surprises: first, he will be astonished at the increased amount which he is enabled by this method to give to the Lord; and secondly, he will be astonished at the increased spiritual and temporal prosperity which the Lord will give to him. For

observe that here is an instance where the Lord actually makes a challenge to his people, and sets up a test case, saying, "Prove me now." Taking this Scripture in connection with others, we find that there are two points to be demonstrated.

1. That faithful and proportionate giving will be rewarded with superabundant spiritual blessing. The statement does not require proof, since experience has stamped it already as an axiom. Other things being equal, that Christian who opens the broadest outlet for charity will find the widest inlet for the Spirit. The health of a human body depends upon its exhalations as well as upon its inhalations. It is reported that a boy who was to personate a shining cherub in a play, on being covered over with a coating of gold leaf, which entirely closed the pores of his skin, died in consequence, before relief could be afforded. Woe to the Christian who gets so gold-leafed over with his wealth that the pores of his sympathy are shut, and the outgoings of his charity are restrained! He is thenceforth dead spiritually, though he may have a name to live.

2. That faithful and proportionate giving will be rewarded with abundant temporal prosperity. This is a saying hard to be received, but it has the emphatic support of Scripture. "Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (Prov. iii. 9, 10). This is but one specimen of many from the Old Testament. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down and

shaken together, and running over, shall men give unto your bosom" (Luke vi. 38). Do we believe these words of our Lord? and can we question that they refer to abundant temporal returns in recompense for abundant giving?

There is a Christian league in this country banded together to promote systematic giving. It brings every member into covenant to keep a strict account with the Lord, and to render him one-tenth of the income. An annual report is made by each member, giving a statement of his business and spiritual prosperity. The secretary recently told us that the results have been surprising, even to the most sanguine advocates of the tithing system; that not only has the income of the missionary societies receiving the funds been greatly increased, but that, out of thousands entering into this league, all but two or three have reported greatly increased business prosperity. Are there not some things to be proved which we have not yet dreamed of either in our philosophy or our mathematics?

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